

Peer Review

Review of: "Feathered Icons: Drivers of Global Attention on Bird Species"

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The author assessed the scientific and societal attention towards bird species globally, also evaluating the impact of several predictors in these metrics. This manuscript can be seen as an update and, in some way, expansion of the 2014 work of Ducatez and Lefebvre, titled 'Patterns of Research Effort in Birds' (note that Ducatez and Lefebvre didn't investigate patterns of societal interest). In any case, it is still an important contribution for the conservation of birds by pinpointing species less familiar to the public and often neglected by the scientific community.

My suggestions/comments on this manuscript are as follow:

Introduction

2nd paragraph:

- "Human values and [their] actions".

3rd paragraph:

- "Scientific knowledges" should be "Scientific knowledge".

- In "relevant ecosystems" I'd remove the word "relevant" as one could argue that all ecosystems are relevant to some extent.

4th paragraph:

- You say that "knowledge about species is often unevenly distributed both taxonomically and geographically", then give some examples of why it may be biased taxonomically. I suggest adding a sentence or two about the direction in which knowledge is biased geographically and the reason for that.

6th paragraph:

- I suggest removing the word ‘Specifically’.

- “reptiles listed by the IUCN as threatened with extinction attract more interest [30]” See also Guedes et al.’s work (<https://doi.org/10.1111/ecog.06491>), which shows that threatened reptiles also receive more scientific attention. Nonetheless, note that many threatened species are difficult to study because of, e.g., restricted geographic ranges and low population sizes, leading to low research effort as reported for several taxa, such as plants (Adamo et al. 2021), fishes (Guy et al. 2021), birds (Ducatez and Lefebvre 2014), amphibians (Silva et al. 2020) and mammals (Amori and Gippoliti 2000).

7th paragraph:

- “lacking a comprehensive global analysis that considers a broader range of influences.” You missed an important study that investigated global patterns of research effort in birds (Ducatez and Lefebvre, 2014. PLoS ONE, 9(2), e89955. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0089955>).

8th paragraph:

- You use ‘we’, but since this is a single-author manuscript, you should use ‘I’ (this apply to the whole manuscript – the same typo can be found in other sections).

Results

Distribution of scientific and public interest:

- Add the common name of *Gallus gallus* (namely, chicken) so that non-taxonomists may easily grasp what bird species is most researched. Additionally, add the scientific name of the species more searched on Wikipedia, including its common name.

- It would be interesting if you provide summary statistics at the family level, showing for example the most and least (re)searched families (e.g., top 10).

Drivers of scientific and public interest:

- In figure 3, there seems to be an error in the variable ‘Nocturnal bird’. There is an asterisk (thus, a significant effect) for scientific interest and no asterisk for societal interest. But looking at the figure, it should be the inverse (note that for societal interest the 95% CI does not cross the 0, meaning the effect is significant, whereas the contrary occurs in the scientific interest model).

- “While both researchers and the public showed more interest in threatened species compared to non-threatened species...” Your data does not support this conclusion. The effect size for the threatened variable was not significant (in both models).

Bias between scientific and public interest:

- “the scientific interest was consistent with public interest”. What do you mean by “consistent”? I guess you mean “similar”.
- “those listed on the IUCN Red List, however, attracted more scientific interest”. Only for Passerine birds.

Discussion

1st paragraph:

- change ‘our study’ by ‘this study’
- You say that “the findings indicate that cultural factors [...] were among the strongest drivers of both public and scientific attention.” However, in the Results you section you say that “While cultural factors explained less variance in scientific interest (4%) and public interest (3%), phenotypic and cultural factors together explained 19% of explained variance in scientific interest and 12% in public interest.” Therefore, your argument seems contradictory.

The role of bird use and trade in shaping species awareness:

- “wild bird trade...” Another point is the spreading of animals to areas outside their native range, which can increase the number of exotic species, a major driver of biodiversity loss.

Species charisma drives public attention:

- “strong public preference for birds with blue and red plumage”. This paper [Chan et al. 2021. Global trade in parrots – Influential factors of trade and implications for conservation. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 30, e01784.] highlights very well this finding.
- “The focus on charismatic species can divert resources away from less appealing but ecologically important species, leading to gaps in conservation efforts.” A counterpoint is that many charismatic species may serve as ‘umbrella species’ (such as the grizzly bear or giant panda), which can be beneficial from a conservation perspective as the protection of such species can indirectly protect other species in their ecosystem (see Branton and Richardson, 2011. Assessing the value of the umbrella-species concept for conservation planning with meta-analysis. *Conservation Biology*, 25(1), 9–20).

Familiarity as a driver of both scientific and public interest:

- “high levels of public [and scientific] familiarity”

Limitations of IUCN status in sustaining public interest:

- Not sure if “conservation rarity” is a good term; I’d just use “conservation status” instead. But more importantly (and as mentioned before), your data (figure 3 and 4) does not support your statement that IUCN status is a significant driver of scientific interest. This part needs to be properly revised.
- What do you mean by “birds still receive little public attention through the lens of IUCN assessments”. Besides being overstudied compared to other taxonomic groups, birds are also well-covered in the IUCN assessments, with most or all species already assessed.

Opportunities to align public awareness with conservation priorities:

- This section could benefit from discussions related to citizen science initiatives, particularly those focusing on overlooked species [see Kittelberger et al. (2021). *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 9, 710396.; Oliver et al. (2025). *Pacific Conservation Biology*, 31(1)]

Methods

Selection of candidate factors:

- A supplementary table containing the number of species (and the % of the total) that had data for a given predictor would be useful. Also, for each predictor you could inform its nature (e.g. binary, continuous) and unit (e.g. km² for range size).
- “nearly all extant bird species”. Say the total number of species in the dataset.

Measures of scientific and public interest:

- Did you use only currently accepted names in the searches, or did you include unique synonyms associated with each species names? We know that taxonomic instability in species identity is not uncommon, so using synonyms plus current valid names may be more accurate when computing your responses.

Other comments on methods:

- You performed several sensitivity analyses, but they were basically ignored in the manuscript. You could add to the supplementary material a text explaining the main differences found in these additional analyses compared to your main findings; otherwise, they’d be wasted analyses.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.